

Observation studying on an autistic child



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Nowadays, Autism is a very popular topic to discuss. Some biological experts said that genetics can cause autistic problem. Asperger's syndrome is one of them. People who have this syndrome may have normal or highly intelligent compare with other people. This syndrome is difficult to analysis because their intelligent can replace the autistic personality. The objective whose name is Z. H was born in 2004 in a Chinese family; later his parents realized his was not able to verbal. After medical checkup, doctor said Z. H has autism. I appreciate that I have an opportunity to have an interview with a six-year-old boy who has this syndrome. This is an individual assignment due to Z. H's body and mental condition. For these years, Z. H has been to many developmental therapies and special education to learn some certain manners. The therapies are broken down into several parts; most of them are activities to establish a child's connection between mind and body. My studying is going to break down into three main groups.

Detail in my proposal:

Interview this person and his parents to know his background.

Observational Study in this child's behavior.

His concentration.

Introduction in Autistic problems and theory

For over a century, experts argue what causes Autistic problem whether it cause by nature or nurture. If we say it is completely cause by nature, it will relate with neurology and genetic make-up. In recent studying, if family members who have this syndrome, the chance he or her siblings would have

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this disease approximately 10 to 20 percent. During the world war two, Hans Asperger discovered syndromes which similar with autism, but participants show that they have at least one specialty such as, intelligent in calculating, drawing or playing musical instruments. This syndrome call Asperger's syndrome. Mostly, males suffer from this disease more than female.

Nowadays, the hot and controversial topic could be " why autistic problems exist in male more than female?" In fact, different perspectives view autistic problem in different way. Besides, biological factor, it has Brian cognitive neuroscience to explain autistic problem. In this perspective, they believe autistic problem cause by the abnormal functioning in the brain such as, hormone imbalance or brain damage. Somehow, in case studying, it still exist the cases who become autistic children by environmental factors such as food nutrition. From 20 century 90s Norway and British experts discover some nutrition will cause or worse the autistic syndrome. For example, the protein which contains Gluten protein and Casein protein will cause the autistic problems; because their body cannot digest or dissolve this kind of protein. But I will not discuss in here. Until today, it is still unknown what exactly cause autistic syndrome.

In human development, I am going to observe my object whose name is Z. H. The objective whose name is Z. H was born in 2004 in a Chinese family; after two years his parents realized his was not able to verbalize. After medical checkup, doctor said Z. H has autism. For these years, Z. H has been to many developmental therapies and special education to learn some certain manners. The therapies are broken down into several parts; most of them are activities to establish a child's connection between mind and body.

In this year, my object is going to be seven years old; he is going to enter the stage call middle childhood. This studying is going to analysis this person in psychosocial, cognitive development. And I will provide some studying data as a reference.

Human development:

In the first three months to twelve months, you already can tell the difference between autistic infants and other infants who do not have autistic problems. In attachment theory, infants need several steps to form attachment, they are pre-attachment phrase, attachment in making, clear-cut attachment phrase and last one is formation of reciprocal relationship. Infants who do not appear separation anxiety could be autistic infants which was develop in the third phrase-clear-cut attachment. Once they fail to develop in the third stage, so they will not display separation anxiety. However, they still can develop the next stage of attachment-formation of reciprocal relationship. They are able to negotiate with their caregiver, but they develop this concept very lately. And they could not establish the third stage of attachment, so in the fourth stage of attachment child will display wired behavior such as; tend to use non-verbal communication often. For example, Z. H used to hold his mother's hand to point to the cookies. This means that he wants to eat cookies. Autistic infants also reject to form eye-contact with their parents and strangers. In cognitive development, this stage people develop important sense of object, we call object permanence. In Piaget's object permanence experiment, the important thing is not children are able to find a hidden toy or object. It is they develop a sense of expectancy. Expectancy is the basic concept to develop and it would

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influence logical thinking in cognitive development, which is why some autistic children are highly intelligent even though they fail to develop psychosocial development. Expectancy is a flexible concept, it has multiple functioning. For example, it can also function at psychosocial development to develop sense of empathy, but this hypothesis need to do further research.

Cognitive neuroscience approach:

Basically, cognitive neuroscience experts come out with three main theories to explain why autistic children could not understand other people's intention, why they have narrow habits and how does cognitive development influence their behavior. They are the theory of mind, weak central coherence theory and central control functioning theory. To understand

other person's thought, belief, and emotion, we called the theory of mind. Unfortunately, these people who suffer from autism spectrum disorder fail to develop this concept. Besides, in infancy and toddlerhood, people develop the sense of empathy. Empathy has the same function with theory of mind.

According to neo-Piagetian, they believe theory of mind is a byproduct from hypercognition. Because of these reasons, autistic patient tend to be social isolation due to they do not know what other people think or look at them. In school play time, their playing styles tend to be parallel play; it means that they do not communicate each other and play on their own. Although their school teacher arranges cooperative play for them, they still like to play their personal stuff. The other theory says that autism spectrum disorder patients' behavior just similar to the patients who have frontal lobe damage. These people weak at central control function. Central control function includes the hypercognition process of the flexible behavior and suppresses inappropriate

behavior. This can explain why autism spectrum disorder patients' like the unchangeable routine, do the same behavior. In psychoanalytic, they said this kind of behavior exists because they use the defense mechanism-fixation. But Central control functioning theory could not explain why they have intelligent ability in some area. Central coherence theory suggest that our sensory perception percept the whole thing. For example, when we see a picture, normal people would prefer to see the whole thing and then focus on the detail in the picture. However, autistic children would see the picture in detail fast and then focus on the whole picture. In their sensory perception, a part is greater than its sum, we call they have weak central coherence. According to this theory, people designed the experiment to analysis autistic children, such as sea taste like salt and _____. Autistic child would write pepper, because pepper has strong correlation between salt.

Overall, the theory of mind can tell us why they are difficult to make friends. Weak central coherence theory tell us why their sensory perception so narrow. However, according to research report, most people who success in field would have autistic syndrome, because they only focus on one thing.

People who have autism spectrum disorder would appear these symptoms which I expect to happen 1) repeat behavior exist over time 2) very narrow or persist to one habit 3) insist of old routine 4) using non-verbal communication more often 5) prefer to stay alone 6) very dependent on parents or elders help

Interview with Z. H's mother:

DATE: March 24th

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Time duration: 15 minutes

Place: Z. H's home

Q1: When did you discover Z. H has autistic problem?

A: we discover he had autistic problem when he is twelve.

Q2: When Z. H was infancy, what was his reaction when you move away?

A: He will feel uncomfortable and anxious when I move away.

Q3: What is his common behavior in the house?

A: he used to hang around and jump a lot in the house. After, we went to the therapist, this behavior become less and less.

Q4: What does he behave at the school, such as does he have any friends at the school?

A: No, he does not have any friends at the school.

Q5: Could you tell what kind of playing style he prefers at the school?

A: He prefers to play alone.

Q6: Does he recognize himself from the mirror?

A: Yes, of course.

Interview with Z. H:

DATE: March 24th

Time duration: 15 minutes

Place: Z. H's home

Q1: Do you miss me when you see me?

A: miss

Q2: Can you come here? I want to give you a hug.

A: (He really come to my side and let me give him a hug)

Note: when I interviewing Z. H, he had difficulty to form an eye-contact communication with me

Observational Studying in Occupational Therapy Classroom

DATE: January 28th

Time Duration: 3 hours

Place: classified

Number of people in the room: 3 people (therapist , Z. H, and me)

Physical Therapy breaks down into several steps. Mostly, it is designed to train children's motor movement. Therapists use two rooms to develop Z. H's motor movement and cognitive development, one is physical therapy class room, and other is monitoring room which means that students learn academic skill from monitor. The sections in cognitive development, therapists guide Z. H to establish recognition, verbalization and sense of hearing. In physical therapy section, therapists also guide Z. H to develop his

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motor movement in balancing, stimulate in his sensory perception.

Meanwhile, they teach some simple commands and morality to Z. H. During this section, I could see Z. H repeat behavior which is jumping. But, I could not say when this behavior exist what was his emotion status, such as happy, angry or depression.

Z. H's Attention through the Observational Studying

Since therapy break down into several steps and in different rooms, the result will be break into two: the attention in physical therapy classroom, and monitoring classroom. In physical classroom, there were five components to accomplish basically. And Z. H showed that he could not focus on his task. Because I noticed that he liked to focus on things which he interest in or moving objects. During these components, Z. H tried to operate the radio which was located at the corner. His concentration in physical therapy classroom approximate five to fifteen minutes. The activities in monitoring classroom are break down into three components basically. Therapists let students sit in front of the monitor to learn some simple vocabulary. If students really participate in this section, they finish one level. During the monitoring learning section, Z. H showed his strong interested in monitoring learning. So in this component, I did not see any attention deficit syndrome appear. However, in the second component which was not relate with monitor, he show this syndrome again, because I saw he try to operate DVD player for several time. Even though his therapist prohibited him from operating DVD player, he still tried to do so. In this all section, Z. H's faced the difficulty on concentrating due to he had interested in operating mechanical item.

Analysis and Discussion:

In the analysis and discussion this section, I should analysis this object and chase back in human development by using the data which I have already collected. Firstly, according to attachment theory Z. H's case I think it could be counted as an exception if I only use one perspective. He suffered from separation anxiety when he was in infancy stage. However, I do not think it that way. During the interview section, I ask his mother about separation anxiety. The result shows that it is negative (see the interview with Z. H's mother in question 2). I believe the reason could be mother's self-esteem effect, memory processing problem and personal defense mechanism. In environmental factor to influence this effect, I think it is high social economic status and siblings or family's pressure. But, I will not discuss how social economic status influence high self-esteem in family. I will discuss how siblings and family influence mother's high self-esteem. In her family, Z. H's problem is very rare and his brothers and sisters do not carry this kind of syndrome. Z. H's cousins do not have this problem as well. Since, Z. H was analysis he has autistic spectrum disorder, his mother felt very depressed and guilt for a period. This could be a nurture factor to influence mother's reaction to my survey and memory process error. Before I start discussing how nurture factor influence memory, try to answer this question " Could you tell me the traffic light's position in Malaysia, is that red light on the top or on the bottom." The same concept to apply memory processing theory, people's sensory perception is selective. I could assume that Z. H's mother was stereotyping-most of the infant will get anxious when the mother is moving away from them. She uses that concept to answer my survey or she

forgot what Z. H's reaction when she moved away. Also, her hope and wishes could manipulate her memory, but I will not discuss here. The last reason could be the interview technique that I did not notice. Firstly, the interview styles that I used tend to be straight forward. Some people may scare about that. The ideal technique should be "slow approach". It means that a goal can be divided into several steps to accomplish. For example, I should not have asked the question directly, first thing I should do is to ask the things happen around Z. H to reduce mother's defense. Also, this technique can let his mother chase back his infancy and toddlerhood stage. In other words, I could get a result which is more accurate by using this "slow approach" technique.

Z. H is a six-year-old boy. The stages he went through are infancy and toddlerhood. Since he suffered from separation anxiety, I think I cannot explain Z. H's behavior and emotion status by using one approach of developmental psychology. Erick Erickson's psychosocial psychology can explain that if I combine with attachment theory. In fact, I assume that the original source of attachment theory is from Erick Erickson's psychosocial. Firstly, at the first stage of psychosocial stage called "basic trust and mistrust." It says responsive care giving will let infants form basic trust. I can say Z. H already in basic trust that can explain why he could suffer from separation anxiety. At the interview section (interview with Z. H's mother question 6 and interview with Z. H question 2 p. 6 and 7); I can say Z. H developed a sense of self-awareness and self-consciousness. His mother said he can recognize himself in front of the mirror, and he understood I was talking to him and giving him a command.

In cognitive development, Z. H's situation is that his linguistic development shows delay because he is an autistic child. In the interview (interview with Z. H question 1 p. 7), I can say his linguistic development stay at one-word speech. This is common problem in autistic children-linguistic delay.

Somehow, Z. H's face social shut down problems because he do not form eye-contact communication with others, and his playing style tend to be parallel play(interview with Z. H's mother question 5 line 14 p. 6). The theory of mind explains why he prefers to play alone, because he does not understand what other people's intention.

During the observational studying section, I observed that his repeated behavior is jumping. Actually, repeated behaviors dependent person's personal background. For Z. H's case is jumping exists over time, in central control functioning theory (intro page 5 line 6) can explain this. But if I want to enter further such as why central control functioning theory causes this problem exist; I may need to do further study. Also, he showed a strong interested in operating mechanical items, such as radio and DVD player (observational section p. 7 and 8), even though therapist asked him to stop it. Apparently, he has not developed or weak in sense of effortful control, in psychoanalytic approach, his ego still underdeveloped, because his structure of personality still work on pleasure principle-the needs must be satisfied immediately. Frontal lobe will be well-developed when people reach early adulthood. It controls our compulsive problems. That is why Z. H insists of operating radio and DVD player even though therapist was not allowed. Also, reticular formation controls our attention. It is not surprise to see Z. H face the challenge in attention, because this part of brain will be well-developed

after people reach puberty. And, this studying only take one day, some result cannot say accurate. For instance, weak central coherence theory (intro page 5 line12), this theory may require responsive observational studying. Basically, it says in autistic patients their sensory perceptions tend to be more selective. In one sentence, a part is greater than its sum.

During the monitoring section, I discovered that Z. H's problem. Z. H was born in Chinese a family, therefore, his native language is Chinese. In the word matching, therapist said a word or a vocabulary in Chinese to let Z. H to match the word, and the word cards was on the floor. For example, if therapist said "stamp", Z. H had to find the card which represent the word "stamp". In Chinese pronunciation, each word has different pronunciation. His was able to detect the number of words which was said. For example, if therapist said "black broad" which translate to Chinese are two words. He would choose the word cards which contain two words in Chinese, but word did not mean "black broad". He could choose the word "stamp" instead. This incidence told me that Z. H is developing a sense of understanding what other people say. But he did it in different manner, in his world, he focus on number of words, not meaning of words.

Over all, in the result analysis I discover it is not enough to use only one perspective to explain and analyze human development. Z. H's case counts as a special case because he was born to be autistic child. The behaviors he occurs are repeated behavior, attention deficit, and delay in linguistic development. Therefore, I use combination of different approaches to analyze Z. H's case. For example, Erik Erikson's psychosocial combine with

attachment theory and effortful control joint with psychoanalytic approach. These approaches have common connection with human development.

Conclusion:

In this research paper, it focuses on external behavior to explain inner personality or self in human development. However, it still has limitation. For example, I could see what really happen in Z. H's mind and his cognitive thought. I know this paper's weakness could be the motivation and introspective part. What drive Z. H to operate the DVD player, although therapist asked him to stop? The second thing is that expectation problem. I believe in human development, the first cognitive developmental concept that children develop is expectation and then it transform to empathy. However, I have lack of evidences to support this hypothesis. I think may be human's mind is too complex to explain, even if we have fMRI and PET scanner. They only can tell what happen in the brain, instead of what happen in the mind. But, I know one thing is definitely is that Z. H is getting better after he join the physical therapy section. His mother said that he could tell a single word, before he went to therapy. It is not a shame to get autistic spectrum disorder; it is people ignore the existence of the problem. Actually, the number of curing autistic children is increasing. In China, their therapy section is based on make-believe play-role play. It combines with Piaget's concept and Bandura's social learning theory to cure the children who suffer from autistic spectrum disorder.